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S E C R E T AMMAN 002505

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL IR JO

SUBJECT: IRANIAN DEPUTY FONMIN IN AMMAN TALKS IRAQ, PEACE
PROCESS; KHARAZI EXPRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT MEK ON
JORDAN-IRAQ BORDER

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B. FBIS GMP20030423000137
C. FBIS IAP20030423000076

Classified By: PolCouns Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

IRANIAN IN AMMAN

¶1. (SBU) Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs, Sayed Mohammed Sadr, visited Amman April 23. He met with King Abdullah -- for whom he carried a message from President Khatami -- and Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher. The official press releases following the meetings (refs) presented a decidedly moderate discussion. The most radical statement attributed to Sadr was that "the Zionist regime of Israel should be strongly considered a serious threat to the region."

¶2. (S) Ali al-Ayed, FonMin Muasher's personal assistant, told PolCouns April 24 that Sadr took an even more moderate line in private with the Jordanians. Sadr told FonMin Muasher that Iran supports "the same outcome in Iraq as Jordan" -- the emergence of a strong, stable Iraqi state. On the peace process, Ayed said Sadr expressed pessimism that the formation of a new Palestinian cabinet and presentation of the Roadmap would lead to concrete progress, not because of the process itself, but because the Iranian government doubts whether Israeli PM Sharon will be willing to reach an acceptable settlement with Palestinians. "Sadr seemed to be completely in the reformist camp," Ayed commented.

KHARAZI CONCERNED ABOUT MEK IN IRAQ

¶3. (S) Separately, Foreign Minister Muasher told the Ambassador and PolCouns April 21 that, during the April 18 meeting of Iraq's neighbors in Riyadh, Iranian Foreign Minister Kharazi asked that Jordan admit a number of Iraq-based members of the Mujeddin-e-Khalq (MEK) terrorist group currently stuck at the Iraq-Jordan border. Kharazi asked that Jordan then arrest the MEK members and extradite them to Iraq. Muasher commented that "this is a political headache we don't need" and said that Jordan would not admit the MEK members. Muasher asked Kharazi about the nearly 1000 Iranian Kurdish refugees also at the border (who had fled the UNHCR-run refugee camp at al-Tash, west of Baghdad). Kharazi said these refugees "were not Iranian and would not be admitted to Iran." Again, Muasher commented, Jordan would not admit these Iranians into its territory.

COMMENT

¶4. (S) Despite the moderate nature of these discussions, the Jordanians understand the dual nature of the Iranian government, and remain concerned about continued Iranian support for Hizballah and other regional terrorist groups. Last year, three members of Hizballah were arrested in Jordan trying to smuggle arms to the West Bank: the Iranians intervened with Jordan to secure their release. In addition, a recent seizure of U.S.-produced C-4 being smuggled from Syria into Jordan originated in Iran (and had been shipped to Iran by the U.S. in 1978). It is this kind of Iranian behavior that has caused the King to postpone several times acceptance of an invitation to visit Teheran.
GNEHM